

Editorial

How to Communicate LCA Results *

A conflict has emerged in Int. J. LCA, that of the gap between Methodology and Application, which seems to be an ever burning process. In his first Editorial [1], the Editor of this Journal invited a multitude of contributions suitable to image the whole area of LCA, and listed "Short Versions of Actual LCAs and Case Studies" in the initial position. The reason for this prioritization was the understanding that LCA has been created for practical applications in product development and improvement, in decision making, for environmental policies, etc. rather than as "l'art pour l'art". In another Editorial [2], we stated, "We would like Int. J. LCA to appeal to the *whole* LCA community, which means that we should perhaps increase our service to colleagues who apply LCA, without neglecting those who develop LCA."

With the fast ongoing process of ISO standardization, the importance of Methodology has increased further. Hence, the majority of published articles concerns LCA Methodology. However, after the process of standardization (ISO 14040-43) has now essentially been finished, the small number of LCA Case Studies published in the Journal hitherto is increasing. And here we are.

A Round Table (via e-mailing) with members of the Editorial Board revealed that this type of contribution is regarded as problematic. Case Studies are said to have no defined target groups except for those working on similar applications; for these, however, the results and data presented are not specific enough. For reasons of confidentiality, reliable data and information are often not disclosed, and this difficulty affects the publication of useful Case Studies.

One use of Case Studies has never been questioned: their application for testing and comparing new methods of inventory analysis, data quality assessment and impact assessment. Contributions of that type, however, are scarce. We continue encouraging the submission of manuscripts on this and similar topics, e.g. a comparative analysis of the most widely used generic/inventory data sets.

Other possibilities are short versions of the original study which indicate where the full study can be ordered. As an outstanding example of this type, the paper by Fawer et al. [3] can be mentioned.

The above mentioned Round Table has further revealed the following suggestions:

1. To divide the journal into two parts, a "fast" part for news, discussions and practical applications, while re-

serving the remainder for scientific, peer-reviewed (methodical) articles.

2. To provide an electronic, supportive information section. "In depth supportive information, data, etc., can be included here and referenced in the papers. This will minimize paper length to ensure wider readership of articles, while providing an easily accessible source of more detailed information and insights. It would be particularly useful to report the full inventory and results data sets for published case studies – otherwise the articles are little more than a long advertisement to inform readers that such a study has been conducted."

With regard to these comments, the possibility of either a fast-part journal and an electronic supportive information section will soon be provided. While the Online-Edition of the Journal (p. 175) has to be identical with the printed version, additional data and information can be published in the forthcoming stand-alone Internet-Journal "Environmental and Health Science (EHS)" (p. 159).

The discussion about the best way of presenting LCA results should be continued. Letters to the Editor on this subject are highly welcome. Longer contributions and opinions can be considered for our online forum "Global LCA Village" edited by José Potting [4] and/or the new Internet-Journal EHS [5].

Finally, let us repeat that in March 2000 the series of international standards ISO 14040-14043 has been completed. New LCA-studies will have to comply with these standards if public acceptability of the results is the aim of the authors. All authors as well as commissioners of LCA-studies are reminded that "comparative assertions" about the environmental performance of products and services are only acceptable according to the international standard, if a critical review has been performed according to section 7.3.3 (ISO 14040) and documented as part of the report. We therefore ask the reviewers of our journal to check this point carefully.

Walter Klöpffer (Editor-in-Chief)
Almut Beate Heinrich (Managing Editor)

References

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- [2] KLÖPFFER, W.; HEINRICH, A. (1999): Can You Imagine the LCA World Without our Journal? Int. J. LCA 4 (4) 183
- [3] FAWER, M.; CONCANNON; RIEBER, W. (1999): Life Cycle Inventories for the Production of Sodium Silicates. Int. J. LCA 4 (4) 207-212
- [4] <http://www.scientificjournals.com>
- [5] <http://www.scientificjournals.com/ehsonline>

* Comments are welcome